

## Keeping Your Holidays Safe

*Army Substance Abuse Program Director, Ron Hester, asked Lisa Frederiksen, Author Speaker Consultant and founder of BreakingTheCycles.com, to provide our troops with six key facts about drinking that may not already be known but that can help Ft. Irwin troops and personnel stay safe this holiday season.*

**1. It doesn't take as much as you think to blow a .08 on a breathalyzer test.** Based on the weight variable\* alone, a person's BAC (blood alcohol content) will likely be .08 as follows:

- 110-129 lbs: 2 drinks in an hour or less
- 130-149 lbs: 3 drinks in 2 hours or less
- 170-189 lbs: 4 drinks in 2 hours or less

[\*Other variables that influence how drunk one person gets compared to another drinking the same amount, include: gender, medications, genetics, stage of brain development (ages 12-21), whether food has been eaten, lack of sleep, mental illness – such as PTSD, anxiety or depression.]

**2. Throwing up, drinking coffee, taking a cold shower or walking around the block will NOT sober a person up.** The only thing that can sober a person up is time. See #3.

**3. It takes about one hour for the liver to rid the body of the alcohol in one standard drink.** If a person drinks six drinks, it'll take approximately six hours to clear the body of alcohol. In the meantime, the alcohol "sits" in the brain, which is what makes a person act and behave differently. See #6.

**4. Not all drinks contain the same amount of alcohol.** A standard drink – one drink – of 80 proof hard liquor, such as vodka, bourbon, tequila = 1.5 ounces. One standard drink of wine = 5 ounces and of regular beer = 12 ounces. Type this link into your browser for more information on standard drinks: <http://tiny.cc/v950nw>. Additionally, drinks per drink container or type of cocktail vary. Use this link for more information on the number of standard drinks per container, <http://tiny.cc/nc60nw>, and this one for the number of standard drinks per cocktail, <http://tiny.cc/ue60nw>.

**5. If you answer once or more to this question,** you may want to visit this link, <http://tiny.cc/bk60nw>, to learn more about healthy and unhealthy drinking patterns:

- For women: how many times in the past year have you had 4 or more standard drinks on a day?
- For men: how many times in the past year have you had 5 or more standard drinks on a day?

**6. When a person drinks more than their liver can process, it changes how their brain functions.** This is what causes people to engage in drinking behaviors, such as getting into fights, emotionally or physically or verbally abusing someone, driving while impaired or having unprotected or unwanted sex. The alcohol changing brain function is what makes people behave differently than they do when sober. A good rule of thumb when in the company of a person drinking more than 4 standard drinks on an occasion (women) or 5 or more standard drinks on an occasion (men) is to remember that person's brain is impaired – it can't function normally. Thus, it's important protect oneself from the drinking behaviors, such as not engaging in the argument or not taking to heart the hurtful things said. When a person is on the receiving end of someone's drinking behaviors – such as sexual assault or verbal abuse or a drunk driving accident – that person experiences **secondhand drinking**.

When a person has had *lots* of drinks, they can actually shut down their brain – the part that controls breathing, heartbeat – and die. Please look at on back for Facts About Alcohol Poisoning.

## **Facts About Alcohol Poisoning**

### **Critical Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Poisoning**

- Mental confusion, stupor, coma, or person cannot be roused.
- Vomiting.
- Seizures.
- Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute).
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths).
- Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness.

### **What Should I Do If I Suspect Someone Has Alcohol Poisoning?**

- Know the danger signs.
- Do not wait for all symptoms to be present.
- Be aware that a person who has passed out may die.

**If there is any suspicion of an alcohol overdose, call 911 for help. Don't try to guess the level of drunkenness.**

### **What Can Happen to Someone With Alcohol Poisoning That Goes Untreated?**

- Victim chokes on his or her own vomit.
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular, or stops.
- Heart beats irregularly or stops.
- Hypothermia (low body temperature).
- Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures.
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage or death.

Even if the victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage. Rapid binge drinking (defined as 4 or more standard drinks/occasion for women and 5 or more for men) is especially dangerous because the victim can ingest a fatal dose before becoming unconscious.